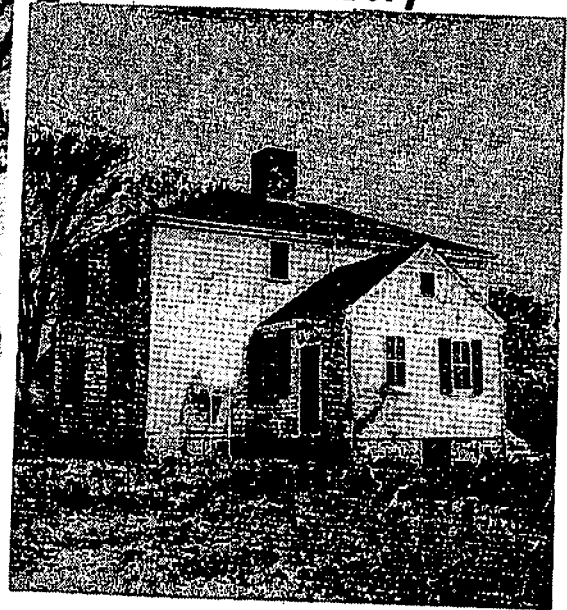
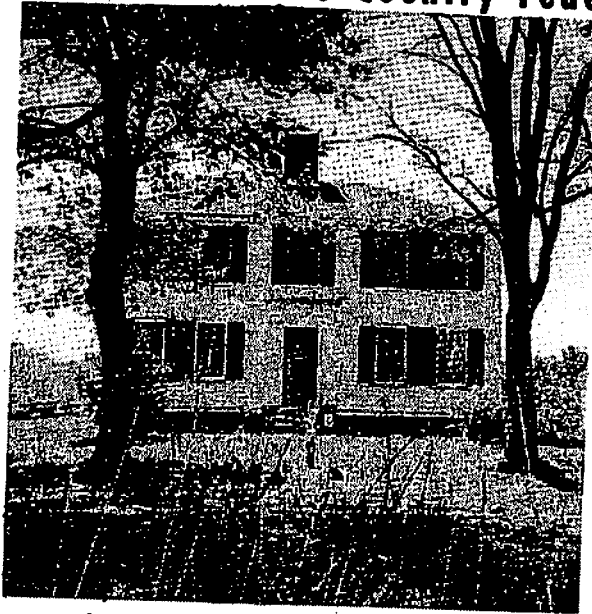


Thursday, August 29, 1968

DUXBURY CLIPPER

## A Rare Country Federal House in Duxbury



This early 19th century "dwelling," located at 485 Tremont St, is worthwhile preserving for two principal reasons. First, it reveals a representative style which is found often on the South Shore, including Duxbury. This style is readily recognized by the four way hip-roof with central chimney and small projecting ell to the rear. Second, and more important, two upstairs rooms in the building were never finished, and retain their original condition to this day.

This lack of finished surfaces allows one to see what is usually hidden under plaster. For instance, in the south chamber, the vertical studs, exterior horizontal tongue-in-groove sheathing and rough cut interior wall sheathing are completely exposed and have acquired that wonderful tobacco brown stain color that wood takes on only after years of exposure to light. The east wall of this room reveals the reverse side of a plaster wall in an adjacent room with its "accordian" type split lathing. A crude ladder was placed over this lathing and leads through the overhead joists, which never received attic floor boards, to the attic area above. The rear chamber behind the chimney, which is equally unfinished, reveals great uncovered overhead timbers, in addition to the exposed flu work of the red brick chimney. It cannot be overstressed how remarkable it is that these areas have remained untouched for over 150 years.

### LEFT UNFINISHED

Why didn't the original owner finish these areas? He did indeed finish off much of the first floor. For example, the "best room," or parlor, has a good diamond motif cornice molding and interesting dentil work and reed molding on the mantle and under the chair rail. There is a typical c. 1800 stairway with curved scroll work under the treads, and the other front room has a finely carved "rope" molding along the cornice work, which is a motif used by typical builder-craftsmen of this period.

The answer to this question may never be known. Perhaps the original craftsman moved away before completion of the house, or the owner ran out of funds to pay him. An even more intriguing question still arises: Why were these second story rooms not finished by succeeding owners? The building may not have been lived in for a time, or possibly it was inhabited by one or two people at a time who had no use for the extra unfinished space.

Even though we find no final answer to these questions, the evidence of what happened or didn't happen is still there and it is still remarkable to find this kind of architectural rarity some 160 years after the building of this house in old Duxbury.

(John F. Cole is a consultant on early domestic architecture and period furniture in New England. The John F. Cole Co., Inc., which has managed the sale of several early Duxbury houses, specializes in the real estate, appraisal and restoration of antique and historic houses in New England. ---- Ed.)